



## Special Needs Inclusion Ministry Newsletter - February 2025



**Welcome to the February Special Needs Inclusion Ministry Newsletter!** Alameda Deanery's Special Needs Inclusion Ministry is an outreach ministry working to ensure that families and individuals with special needs experience welcome, support and spiritual nourishment within Alameda's Catholic parishes. Our group has provided awareness training sessions for those serving in liturgical ministry and organized sensory-friendly Masses, blessings, and events.



If you would like to be added to the confidential distribution list or if you are interested in attending our monthly get-togethers, please e-mail us at [specialneeds@sjbalameda.org](mailto:specialneeds@sjbalameda.org). Also, please visit our website <https://sjbalameda.org/special-needs> for more information and resources. (Feel free to join us even if you are not Catholic. If our community or resources can be of benefit to you, you belong!)

Blessings,  
The Special Needs Inclusion Ministry



**SENSORY-FRIENDLY MASS:** Monthly sensory-friendly Masses are celebrated at Saint Barnabas (1427 6th St, Alameda). **Saint Barnabas** celebrates **sensory-friendly Masses on the third Saturday of each month, at the 4:30 pm (Vigil) Mass**, with quieter music (soft piano) and of course no incense. This month's Mass will be on **Saturday, February 15**, and next month on **Saturday, March 15**. Please feel free to invite friends. We look forward to seeing you there!

**PARISH FAMILY ACTIVITY:** On **Sunday, February 16**, all are invited to the **Parish Family Activity in St. Joseph's Gathering Space** (or, if it rains, in the St. Joseph's Elementary School) **after 9:30 Mass**. There will be Mardis Gras, Lenten, and Saint Peter's Chair crafts.

**SPECIAL NEEDS INCLUSION MONTHLY MINISTRY MEETING:** Please join us for discussion of how we in the Catholic community can better serve individuals with disabilities. Fellowship (including light refreshments) follows each meeting. Our ministry meetings are at **St. Barnabas**, across the street from the church, in **Room 3 of the Child Unique Montessori building (1400 6th St)**. This month, we are meeting on **Tuesday, February 24 at 6:30 PM**. Please contact us at [specialneeds@sjbalameda.org](mailto:specialneeds@sjbalameda.org) for more information.

### Feast Days and Highlights of February:



In the secular world, February is often viewed as a time to express romantic love. However, our Catholic feast days and traditions celebrate and honor love somewhat differently. On **February 2**, we celebrate the **Feast of the Presentation of the Lord**. This feast takes place 40 days after the birth of Jesus, honoring when Mary and Joseph brought him to the Temple to consecrate him to God according to the Law of Moses. There, the Holy Family encountered two prophets—

Simeon and Anna—who recognized Jesus as the Redeemer of the world. Seeing Baby Jesus, Simeon gave thanks to God: "For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight for all your people." Luke 2:30-31. Jesus, the "Word made flesh," represents God's enduring and immeasurable love for humankind.

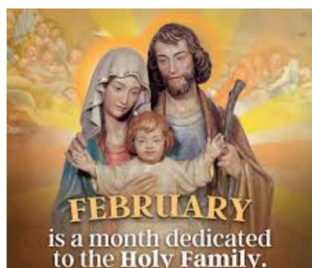


The feast day of Mother Mary, **Our Lady of Lourdes**, is celebrated on **February 11**, honoring her apparitions to 13-year-old St. Bernadette, in a grotto in Lourdes, France. During these visions,

Mother Mary asked St. Bernadette to pray for the conversion of sinners. She also requested that a chapel be built at the site (although it took time for the community to agree). Perhaps most strikingly, she instructed St. Bernadette to dig in the soil by the grotto until a spring of water emerged: From the spring, many believers were healed. Several instances of miraculous healing continue there to this day. The Lourdes visitations are a reminder of Mother Mary's nurturing love for all her children. **St. Joseph Basilica** houses a small replica of the Lourdes grotto: All are invited to visit and experience Mother Mary's loving presence.



**St. Valentine's Day** on **February 14** is no longer a feast day; however, traditionally the day was meant to honor and express **agape** (love as empathy and charity) rather than romantic love. Additionally, the church now celebrates **National Marriage Week (Feb. 7-14)** and **World Marriage Day** on the second Sunday of February (this year on **Feb. 9**) to recognize and honor those who have chosen the **Sacrament of Marriage**. This year's theme is "**Marriage: Source of Hope, Spring of Renewal**." Additionally, the **full month of February is dedicated to the Holy Family** to encourage us to look to them as a model. As St. John Paul II noted, "The Holy Family is the beginning of countless other holy families. The history of mankind, the history of salvation, passes by way of the family." For the Catholic community, this month can be a time to offer additional outreach and resources to its families, especially to families with special needs members.



**FAMILY CRAFTS AND ACTIVITIES:** Please click the link below for coloring pages to celebrate Saint Peter's Chair, Mardis Gras—and for other seasonal resources and activities. <https://sjbalameda.org/family-activity>



### Other Prayer Opportunities:

**SENSORY-FRIENDLY VENERATION IN THE BASILICA:** Taizé is an Ecumenical, candle-lit service of prayer offered in simple chant, Scripture readings, silent worship, and veneration of the Cross. Brother Roger established the Taizé Community in 1940 in Taizé, France, as a witness to peace and reconciliation, for which our community gathers in prayer. All are welcome to join the Taizé ministry for an evening of Taizé prayers around the Cross held in the Basilica, 8 - 9 pm (4th Fridays of the month, except for months of November and December on the 3rd Fridays). Follow Taizé on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TaizeOnTheIsland>



**EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION and MONTHLY FAMILY HOLY HALF-HOUR:** Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is offered every Friday at St. Joseph Basilica from 1 to 7 pm. All are always welcome. However, on one Friday each month the time from 5:30 to 6pm is specifically designated as a Family Holy Half-Hour to encourage participation by children. Simple activities are offered to help children engage: singing, reading, coloring. Families (and all) are welcome to join the potluck immediately after the Holy Half-Hour. This could be an opportunity for those with special needs to experience this sacred and healing time with Jesus. Whether sitting or kneeling in prayer or meditation, Eucharistic Adoration can bring us the gifts of calm and joy, trust and patience. The next date is **February 21**.



### Resources Corner

#### RESOURCES LINKS:

<https://sjbalameda.org/special-needs> St. Joseph Basilica webpage with parish and deanery resources  
<https://www.youtube.com/AutisticPriest> Talks by Fr. Matthew P. Schneider, LC, a Catholic priest with autism  
<https://ascensionpress.com/pages/hands-of-grace-glossary> **Hands of Grace Video Glossary: Catholic Sacraments in American Sign Language** Glossary of 55 videos, teaches how to sign religious terms covered within the video. Father Séan Loomis finger-spells the words and then shows how to sign the sign  
<https://summerkinard.com/> Orthodox Christian mother of autistic children writing about the practicalities of autistic and spiritual life  
<https://catechistcafe.weebly.com/for--with-disabilities.html> A "Ministry For & With People of All Abilities", this is a catechist resource site that includes downloadable materials, trainings and videos